



“And if elected, I promise to do everything in my power to get re-elected.”

Charter Schools: State Funded Corruption

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

Charter schools were legislated into existence in Ohio back in 1997. Advocates for the alternative educational institutions insisted that there was a better way to educate the nation’s children than public schools. Surely, a private company would do a better job than the government ever could. It turns out, however, that charter schools are consistently scoring lower than public schools and, to top it off, are riddled with corruption.

The Akron Beacon Journal reported that Ohio charter schools appear to have misspent public money nearly four times more often than any other type of taxpayer-funded agency. Since 2001, \$27.3 million was found to have been improperly spent by charter schools. Charter schools have operated in this state with no oversight. In PGO’s experience, a quick review of an auditor’s report for Aurora Academy shows that taxpayer funds have even been used by charter school administration to purchase alcohol in the past. Clearly there is a problem.

Unfortunately, legislation that would provide some transparency to the charter school fiasco has stalled. And, to make matters worse, the Ohio Supreme Court recently issued a decision favorable to the White Hat Management company, one of the pioneers of for-profit charter school management. In the decision, the court failed to provide any guidance about any disclosure of the use of public funds by this private company. This decision allows White Hat to force a charter school board to purchase back all the equipment White Hat bought using public

funds given to it by the board, effectively converting public funds into private funds to the detriment of the taxpayers and the enrichment of the profiteer.

Charter schools, in theory, may have been a noble experiment. The problem is, this experiment has failed—greed and corruption have prevailed. As long as inaction by the state government remains the status quo on this issue, this madness will continue. We must encourage our legislators to reform this broken system and stop the looting of the public’s treasury by unscrupulous, greedy opportunists.

Koch Brothers Get Chilly Reception in Columbus

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

Speaking of unscrupulous and greedy, on August 21, the Koch brothers decided to hold a convention for the group Americans for Prosperity in Columbus. Americans for Prosperity is well known for its attacks on the working class and its distinctly anti-labor agenda. It supports imposing right to work laws, rails against raising the minimum wage and lobbies to eliminate the protections workers have received from the Affordable Care Act. While whispers of SB5 still linger here in Ohio, Labor came out to let the Kochs know what it thinks about their agenda.

Over 3000 union members protested the Koch brothers’ event. Members arrived in droves. Union brothers and sisters from UAW, AFSCME, USW, and the Teamsters made it clear that the Americans for Prosperity agenda was not welcome in Ohio’s capital. Retirees also joined the protest to combat



“I would like you to be more self-reliant, show more initiative, and take greater personal responsibility—but check with me first.”



the pension cuts supported by the Koch brothers group. “I was in Vietnam and worked my whole life in the mill,” said Paul Santilli, president of Massillon chapter of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees. “I’ll be damned if we can let a tiny handful of billionaires steal our nation.” As the 3000 protesters marched the few blocks to the Columbus Convention Center, police lining the route shouted, “This is the backbone of America! I’m proud to be here!”

When we have been repeatedly told that organized labor in the United States is shrinking, union members coming together and taking a stand shows that the movement is still strong. With the decline of the middle class, more and more people are beginning to realize how important unions are to American prosperity. It is always heartening to witness outspoken union advocates coming together and fighting for the workers that make this country great.

Weingarten Rights Reminder

By Nicole D. Jackson, PGO Field Representative

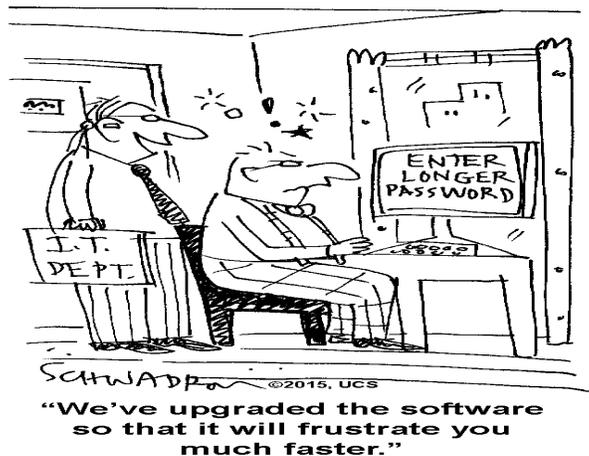
In unionized workforces, employees are entitled to union representation, upon request, when they are questioned about matters that may lead to discipline. This right to union representation is known as “Weingarten rights.” *Weingarten* was a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case in 1975 that held that workers have a right to a union steward during investigative interviews, or “when a supervisor asks for information that could be used as a basis for discipline.”

Under your *Weingarten* rights, you have a legal right to a union representative during these investigatory interviews. This means that in the meeting, the employee is expected to answer questions in connection to possible wrongdoing or something that could lead to discipline. *Weingarten* rights do not cover meetings where the communication is one way, such as when a decision has already been made regarding discipline and the employer is only notifying the employee of its decision.

Generally (i.e., unless your collective bargaining agreement provides differently), it is the employee's duty to request union representation. The Employer does not have a legal obligation to inform you of your right. It is up to employees to know their rights, and to politely state that no questions will be answered until a union representative arrives.

Sometimes an employee may be spontaneously engaged in a meeting and questioned about something by their supervisor. These situations make it less clear whether or not the employee is engaged in an investigatory interview. Other times a routine meeting with management may turn into an investigatory interview. For *Weingarten* rights to take effect, the law generally requires only that the employee has a reasonable belief that he or she may be disciplined. The employer can't circumvent your *Weingarten* rights by claiming the meeting would not lead to discipline.

If your employer refuses to grant your request to give you union representation in a situation that you reasonably believe could lead to your discipline, you have a legal right to refuse to answer questions until you receive such representation.



PGO Contract Negotiations

PGO Council 13

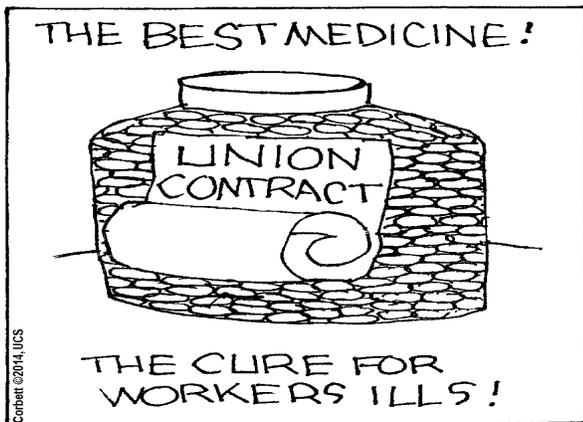
Members working at Lucas County Children Services approved a new three-year collective bargaining agreement that will pay \$500 lump sum payments in May, 2015 and January, 2016. In lieu of lump sum payments, workers at the beginning three steps of the wage schedule will get step increases this year and next through April 2016. Wages for the second and third years of the contract will be set through reopener negotiations. Other benefits include a third day of unrestricted personal leave and an extra half-day off during the Christmas-New Year Holidays. The new agreement is effective through April, 2018.

The Union bargaining committee included Council 13 president **Joe Destazio**, vice-presidents **Lynn Pinkelman** and **Dave Rudebock**, chief steward **Becky Davenport**, steward **Melinda Meehan**, members **Vonda Williams** and **Nancy Reineke**, AFSCME regional director **Steve Kowalik** and PGO executive director **Chauncey Mason**.

PGO Council 15

PGO members working at the Lucas County Correctional Treatment Facility have approved a new two-year collective bargaining agreement that will provide wage schedule step increases and one percent general wage increases in January and July, 2016. The new contract will run through June, 2017.

The Union bargaining committee included Council 15 president **Alyssa Zagata**, vice president **Derrick Ford**, secretary/treasurer **Henry King** and PGO executive director **Chauncey Mason**.



New PGO Council 6 Officers

PGO members working at the Lucas County Veterans Services Commission have elected **Sonya Jenkins** to serve as the council’s chief steward and **Jana Oyerbides** to serve as the steward. Congratulations and thanks to both!

Steel Workers Prepare to Strike

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was abuzz early September. Downtown streets were blocked as the United Steelworkers held a rally for its members. The purpose of the rally was to inform the members and the public about the ongoing contract negotiations with US Steel, Alleghany Technologies, and ArcelorMittal. Steel worker Edward Piovesan stated "[t]he rally is going to show that we have the public behind us, that’s the main thing, that’s the only thing.”

Negotiations for the new contracts began back in June. The previous agreements expired on September 1. USW Union officials have stated that the negotiations have slowed to a crawl due to the countless concessions the employers are seeking. Additionally, U.S. Steel has proposed dramatic benefit cuts and increased cost of health care premiums for active employees, as well as a two-tier high-deductible health plan for new hires. Even with a large number of issues still on the table, negotiations have been extended and a work stoppage has not yet occurred.

Negotiations are set to pick back up September 27. The USW has agreed to provide US Steel with 48 hours notice if the negotiations break down and they choose to go on strike. Here’s hoping the brothers and sisters in Pittsburgh get the contracts they deserve.



The fourth quarter PGO Executive Board meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. at the Lucas County Children Services offices, 705 Adams Street, Toledo, Ohio.